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This paper reports on results of a questionnaire survey of 84 schools representing 25,928 Afrikaans-speaking pupils in the Cape Province of South Africa. The survey revealed that only 13 of the teachers were English-speaking; the rest were Afrikaans-speaking. Most of the children never hear English out of school, or hear it under conditions requiring only a fairly limited understanding. The majority of the principals maintained that the most important skill the primary school child had to master was to speak English. In addition to being the medium of instruction, it was needed in offices, at work and in commerce (because "most businesses are in English"), in the professions, as qualification for employment in the S.A.R. and civil service, and for a variety of other reasons. Of the most troublesome language problems, verbs and tense seem far more difficult even than prepositions, word order, and vocabulary, both to learn and to teach. Other conclusions reached were (1) many young teachers in these schools are not competent to teach English; (2) the methods of teacher training need revision; (3) the teaching materials used lack systematic planning, do not have enough drills and exercises, and have too much emphasis on formal grammar. Also commented on in this report are results of a questionnaire sent to 240 post-graduate and post-diploma students entering the faculty of education for one year's training. (AMM)

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The Teaching of English as a Second Language in Primary Schools in the Cape Province

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ANALYSIS OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL SYLLABUS IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING & HOW THE SYLLABUS IS INTERPRETED IN SOME 84 SCHOOLS. SUGGESTIONS ON HOW THE TEACHING MIGHT BE MADE MORE EFFECTIVE.

(1)

English as second language in primary schools in certain areas of the Cape.

The pilot study for this investigation took the form of personal interviews. It soon became apparent, however, that the most effective method of procuring data would be to distribute a questionnaire.

The lone investigator, who has neither the clerical assistance nor the technical assistants (not to mention the funds) that make vast projects possible, has to improvise techniques. The ones used here are not, perhaps, noteworthy for the size of the sample nor the weight of their statistical evidence, but the results may provide some interesting comment on the problem of teaching English as second language in the primary school.

One hundred and fourteen questionnaires were sent out. Eighty-fourwere returned. The responses of the eighty-four school principals and, in some cases, their staffs too, have been collated and it is with their voices that this paper speaks.

The sampling covered the whole of the Cape Province which, for the purpose of this study, was divided into five areas:

1.	North of Cape Town	22 schools
2.	Cape Town & environs	17 schools
3.	The Boland	9 schools
4.	The Eastern Cape	21 schools
5.	The Karoos (Great & Little)	15 schools

In the material that follows, the question that was set will be given first. The analysis of the answers will follow. Finally a conclusion will be drawn.

To persons not familiar with the teaching of English as a second (or foreign) language in South Africa, some of the questions that were included may appear strange. English is being taught in many countries in the world today but, in some respects, the challenge to the South African teacher is unique for there are emotional issues here that are not met in other communities.

1. NUMBER OF PUPILS, NUMBER OF ENGLISH SPEAKING TEACHERS, FREQUENCY OF USAGE OF ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM & PLACES IN WHICH IT IS USED.

The 84 schools that were covered by this questionnaire accommodate 25,928 Afrikaans-speaking pupils. The schools are of three kinds:

46 are single medium
26 are parallel medium
13 are double medium

There are, among the teachers teaching these 25,928 children only 13 who are English-speaking. The mother tongue of the rest is Afrikaans.

The principals declare that of the 84 schools, the children of 21 of them (in the Karoo & the zone North of Cape Town) "never hear English out of school, those in 35 hear it "sometimes" in the bioscope, in shops, in the streets. In 28 schools they are said to hear it "often" : they have English-speaking friends, they are in schools where both languages are used as medium of instruction, they live in predominently English areas - places where there are army or airforce camps, or their parents are bilingual and ambitious for their children.

CONCLUSIONS (1)

N.B. It must be clearly understood that these claims apply only to this sample. No dogmatic claims are made for South Africa as a whole.

(1) Practically all the Afrikaans children are taught by non-native speakers of English.

(2) More than two-thirds never hear English out of school or, if they do, they hear it under conditions that call for no more than understanding of what is said in a fairly limited field.

2. WILL THE CHILDREN IN YOUR SCHOOL EVER REALLY NEED ENGLISH WHEN THEY LEAVE SCHOOL? IF THEY WILL, WHAT WILL THEY NEED IT FOR? WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR THE ADULT AND THE CHILD TO BE ABLE TO DO : READ, SPEAK OR WRITE ENGLISH?

It is, as we all know, compulsory for the Afrikaner to "learn" English in school. Does he really need it as a language in his life? If he never hears or uses it out of school is it not a waste of time to struggle to teach it to him?

If he does need it, it would seem important to know what he'll need it for. If you know this, you are in a better position to decide what he must be taught.

There was only one principal who felt it wasn't really necessary for the platteland child to learn English because every "foreigner" in their town can speak Afrikaans, no matter how badly. The rest all maintained that the Afrikaans child needs English. Two-thirds of the principals maintained that the most important skill the primary school child had to master was to speak English. Three-quarters of them believe that the most important skill for the adult is to be able to speak the language.

The question as what he'd need English for, produced an interesting commentary of life in South Africa. He'll need it in offices, at work and in commerce because "most businesses are English", he'll need it as a compulsory qualification for employment in the S.A.R. and civil service. He'll need it in the professions and for further study. He'll require it to be "educated", for relaxation, for sport, to be able to "read", to "expand" his mind, to travel and to earn a good living. A note of pathos is struck by one comment to the effect that the children will need English as they will have to leave their home village when they grow up as there are no opportunities for them there.

CONCLUSIONS (2)

1. The Afrikaans child needs to learn English.
2. The skill of learning to speak English is the most important one to be mastered in the primary school. The need for being able to speak English becomes even more important when he grows older.
3. He needs English for his work, for further study and for general success in life.

3. ARE THE CHILDREN IN YOUR SCHOOL KEEN TO LEARN ENGLISH? IF SO, WHY?

The groups that are keenest to learn English are found in Cape Town and its immediate environs and in the Boland. In the Eastern Cape, where there is a good seasoning of large towns, one at least of which is predominently English, there is still a fairly marked keenness. There is much less interest in the Northern area, and least in the Karoo. The principals rate the attitude of the teacher as being the most important influence in persuading the child to learn English. Typical comment was : "Where the teacher is keen and enthusiastic, he works wonders." .... "The teacher who speaks it well gets the best results..." The next most frequently quoted reason for interest was the competition provided by English-speaking fellow students in the English-medium section of the school.

It would seem that the "hidden" factor of environment is greatly strengthened by good teachers who are themselves stimulated and interesting. The competition offered in dual-and parallel-medium schools is augmented by the opportunity to hear English by alternate English and Afrikaans "days".

CONCLUSIONS (3)

1. Good teachers have a profound influence on the taught.
2. The parallel and dual school environment appears to be of value in stimulating interest.

4. WHAT DOES THE AFRIKAANS CHILD FIND THE MOST DIFFICULT THING TO LEARN IN ENGLISH? WHAT DOES THE TEACHER FIND THE MOST DIFFICULT THING TO TEACH?

The two things which children learn with the greatest difficulty are verbs and tense. These outstrip by far prepositions, word order and vocabulary, which are the three next most troublesomelanguage problems.

The things which the teacher finds most difficult to impart are verbs and tense. Nothing else, save word order, causes them much trouble, apparently.

CONCLUSION (4)

1. Verbs and tense are the most difficult things both to learn and to teach.

5. IF THE YOUNG TEACHER HAS SHORTCOMINGS IN HIS CAPACITY TO TEACH ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE, COULD YOU NAME THEM?
AND:
IS THERE ANYTHING WHICH YOU, AS AN EXPERIENCED TEACHER, COULD SUGGEST MIGHT BE DONE AT TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTIONS TO BETTER EQUIP THE STUDENT TO TEACH ENGLISH?

There were no other questions in the whole study which produced the unanimity that these two did. It is felt, in the light of what has already been said, that these comments are of very great importance.

Of the 84 principals consulted, four failed to specify any shortcomings. One said he had always had good English teachers, another said he employed only married women. The other two left blanks.

All the remaining eighty expressed some degree of dissatisfaction with their young teachers. There were 53 reports out of 80 that the young teacher: "Doesn't know the second language and can't speak it." The expression of their dissatisfaction ranged from comments such as : "Can't carry on a conversation, never mind teach it!" ..... "Very few can speak English, never mind correctly .." ..... "People who haven't passed English in their training are allowed to teach it and they have to teach the very things that caused their own failure." ... to a complaint that the young teacher used the indirect method when the principal wasn't looking!

Fourteen principals reported that the young teachers can't pronounce English properly. Fourteen complained that the young teacher is too shy to speak English. Other principals reported that vocabularies were very limited and spelling and verbs were very weak.

The suggestions made for improvement of the training of young teachers were:

1. More stress should be laid on oral work in their training.
2. More stress should be laid on teaching them practical, everyday English usage.
3. They should be made to do more reading and so improve not only their control of the language but also to remedy their deficient "backgrounds".
4. The standards should be raised and the minimum requirements should be higher. Some principals went so far as to say that they should be trained through the English medium. Others thought the training should be double medium. Others thought that they should be made to do three months teaching practice in English-medium schools.

Something of the desparation being felt by school principals might be indicated by quoting some of the apposite comments they made on the young teacher:

1. They have read no books, they have had little practical experience of the language, they know no grammar. They have neither the knowledge nor the confidence to speak English.
2. Their basic knowledge is often inadequate. The half blind can't lead the blind. No one can inspire children or arouse their interest if he isn't master of his subject.
3. The matriculation student shouldn't have to struggle to understand English!
4. They should make a more intensive study of English. They should have more opportunity to mix with English-speaking people. There should be higher exam requirements, especially with reference to oral.
5. There is a very serious lack of knowledge of English idiom even among students with A/E.
6. The standard should be raised. Students who don't know English shouldn't be allowedto be teachers.
7. It would be a good thing if they had a better control of English. They could, perhaps, have a longer course with more English rather than all the rubbish like, singing, woodwork and drawing.
8. The standard should be raised. The teacher can't teach what he doesn't know.

9. The approach must be practical. It's no use knowing the literature of the language if I can't make a couple of everyday sentences that are correct.
10. There is a need for English specialists in the primary school.

CONCLUSIONS (5)

1. Many young teachers are not competent to teach English.
2. There appears to be need for revision of training methods.

6. WHO COMPILES (a) THE DRILLS AND MODEL SENTENCES?
(b) THE SPELLING LISTS?

The primary school syllabus calls for the construction of "drills". These are, for the greater part, made up by the more experienced class teachers under the guidance of the head.

Spelling lists have three sources - the reading book, class lists that are adapted to the level of the class being taught - there is, apparently, great divergence in the capacity of children in any one class from year to year, and the teacher. All three sources would appear to be based upon subjective criteria. There appears to be no basic minimum. This is what accounts, possibly, for the very poor spelling of many adult Afrikaans students who spell phonetically and have never heard of Mr. Jones and his spelling demons.

CONCLUSIONS (6)

1. Drills are usually composed by non-native speakers of English.
2. Spelling lists are subjectively constructed.

7. IF REFRESHER COURSES IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE WERE PROVIDED, WITH WHAT PORTION OF THE WORK WOULD YOU OR YOUR STAFF LIKE TO BE HELPED?

CONCLUSIONS (7)

1. Oral and written composition topped the poll.
(Oral composition means, for the primary teacher, training pupils to converse in English).
2. The teaching of tenses, spelling and pronunciation were the next most frequently mentioned.

TEACHING MATERIALS

Part of the assignment that I undertook was to examine the teaching materials in use. I had hoped, originally, to establish what books were actually in use and then to examine them in some detail. This was, however, not to be. The data collected is, therefore, in general terms.

8. DO THE TEXT-BOOKS USED IN YOUR SCHOOL FORM THE BASIS OF THE COURSE OR ARE THEY USED ONLY AS SOURCES OF MATERIAL FOR PRACTISING WHAT HAS BEEN TAUGHT IN CLASS?

Fifty-five percent of the schools base their teaching on the text-book. Forty-five percent use the books to suppliment class teaching.

When asked whether they found any short-comings in the text-books being used, only 70 of the 84 principals replied. Over two-thirds said they had short-comings.

The comments and criticisms will be reported at some length as they throw interesting light on the problem.

CONSTRUCTION:

1. There is too much jumping around, there is no evidence of systematic planning.
2. The tenses are all muddled up.
3. They should handle each aspect as a unit and not chop it up.

TOO LITTLE / FEW:

1. There are too few revisionary exercises.
2. They concentrate too little on important things.
3. There are too few exercises after the explanation of new facts.
4. There are too few practical exercises in the use of tense, word order, sentence building, vocabulary and idiomatic English.
5. There are too few comprehension exercises.
6. There are too few drills.
7. The fault of most of them is that they give exercises to do straight after explanation. More good and correct examples would prove illuminating.

TOO MUCH /MANY:

1. There is too much formal grammar. The idea that you teach a language by learning grammar is the most serious ill in teaching.

2. There are too many exercises with little functional value. There is over-emphasis on some parts of the syllabus and too little on others.
3. There are useless foreign words of no practical value to the child and some readers contain too many difficult proper nouns, e.g. Bantu names.

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY AND GENERAL:

1. Some principals report that the readers are too difficult.
2. Sometimes the language is beyond the children's comprehension and should be checked by experts.
3. The reading material should be far simpler and more attractively illustrated.
4. The explanations are not always clear and pupils have difficulty keeping to the standard required, because the books don't always suit the class.
5. A common complaint was that the books don't stimulate the pupils or cater for their interests, as they have too little contact with the pupils' experience.
6. Some complained that the language books were "too abstract", didn't supply enough practice in current usage and everyday English.
7. One principal suggested that the language books and the readers might be correlated so that they were mutually illustrative.
8. There were complaints that some contained language errors.
9. One principal summed up by saying:
"The existing series can all be used to advantage if the teacher knows his subject." (The italics are mine).

CONCLUSION (8)

1. Teaching materialsmanifest certain deficiencies.

In an effort to throw further light on the primary school and to validate the foregoing information, I gave a questionnaire to 240 post-graduate and post-diploma students on their admission to the faculty of education, where they were to undergo a year's professional training. At the end of the year I noted their results. Taking these as the criterion, I took a sample of 120 students made up of 40 who passed on the higher grade, 40 who passed on the lower grade and 40 failures. The sampling covered a fairly even grading of ability (or the lack of it) in each category.

The scope of the questionnaire was as follows:

1. A rating of the language proficiency of both the father and the mother and the frequency with which both speak English.

2. The type of primary school attended and the type of high school (parallel-, dual- or single-medium).
3. If, when attending a dual- or parallel-medium school, the student associated with children of the other language group.
4. How often the student spoke English out of school when he was in primary and high school.
5. The degree of their keenness for studying English in primary and high schools, if their attitude changed and if it did, why and when.
6. Whether they read and speak English now and if so how frequently.
7. Whether they feel the need for English in their lives now. If they do, is this for work or everyday living? Which aspect of the language (speaking, reading or writing) they feel they need most.

It is appreciated that this sample was taken from a selected field, in that the sifting process of a long series of examinations had eliminated the less intelligent and the less ambitious. It must be pointed out, however, that this sample contained diploma students, many of whom can hardly be said to represent academic material, in the true sense of the word.

If you ask the adult Afrikaner why little Afrikaners should learn English the reply is usually that English opens up a field of literature he might otherwise be denied. In the study referred to above I asked the students to name three books they had read and enjoyed. I also asked them to name the newspapers and periodicals they read. An optimism that we might harbour as to the educative or broadening effects of their reading is unjustified. Further reference to this will be made in the second part of this paper.

RESULTS

1. The earlier you begin speaking English (i.e. in the pre-school years) the greater your chances of success in later life.
2. The less fluent in English the Afrikaans-speaking mother of the student is, the smaller his chance of success. The mothers of the better students speak English more frequently than those of the weak students.
3. The fathers of the weaker students speak English less frequently than those of the better students.
   It would seem, however, that the influence of the ability and the frequency of usage of English by the Father isn't as marked as that of the mother.
4. More of the weak students went to single medium schools and fewer to parallel and dual medium schools than the better students. Fewest were in the dual medium.
5. In the dual and parallel medium schools fewer of the weak students spoke English to their English-speaking fellow scholars as was the case with the better students.

6. The weaker the students the fewer of them there were who spoke English out of school during the primary years. (During that phase of their education, 60% of the weakest group never spoke English out of school at all.) There was a similar tendency in the high school but it wasn't so marked.

7. The best students were the keenest on learning English in the primary school, while the weakest were least interested. In the high school the number of the best students who were very keen on learning English had increased. Interest among the medium group had risen but there was still no one in the weakest group who was "very keen", though there had been a shift, - a slight one - away from "not interested at all" to "fairly interested".
It seems, then, that the student who succeeds in learning English is the one who begins early and is keen in the primary school. The weak student is the late starter and though the 50% who were "not interested" in learning English in the primary school is reduced to about 25% in the high school he is, at no stage, very keen on learning English.

8. The influence of the teacher appears to have a marked effect on the attitude of the child towards learning the second language. About half the students reported that, during their school careers, their attitude towards learning English improved. Of this number, 25 attributed the change to having a teacher who was very good, or had new methods, or was interesting. Some reported that their attitude changed when they began to read more and found how interesting English books were. Some reported that their attitude changed when they began to make English friends.

9. The better the student, the more frequently he reads English. He also speaks it more than the weaker one. All the students report that they need English now. It is interesting that the weaker ones find they need it more for their work and less for daily communication, while the reverse is true of the better ones.
It would seem that the good students read more, they therefore read better and find less difficulty with their work or they are, at least, less conscious of a struggle with the language.

10. The greater percentage of students, no matter what their ability, feel that what they would like to be able to do most (and better) is to speak English. The better ones want to be able to communicate better with English-speaking people, while the weaker ones specify that they find they need it "in shops" and when doing vacation jobs - their expression of their "need" is in more specific terms.

CONCLUSIONS (9)

1. The student most likely to succeed in learning English well

begins speaking it before he goes to school, he has a mother who speaks it fluently and often. His father is also fluent and speaks English frequently.
If he goes to a dual-or parallel-medium school, he speaks English to the English-speaking pupils. He speaks English frequently out of school. He is keen on English from his primary school days onwards. He reads English frequently now but speaks English less frequently than he reads it. He feels his greatest need to be able to speak English better, so that he may have easier and more satisfactory communication with his English-speaking associates.

2. It would, perhaps, not be reckless to suggest that the student who succeeds would appear to owe his motives and his progress, in part, to factors that lie outside the school.

SUMMARY

AS FAR AS THIS PARTICULAR STUDY IS CONCERNED, IT WOULD SEEM THAT:

1. Practically all the Afrikaans-speaking pupils are taught English by non-native speakers.
2. More than two-thirds never hear English out of school or, if they do, they hear it under conditions that may call for nothing more than understanding what is said, in a fairly limited field.
3. The Afrikaans child does need to learn English.
4. The skill of learning to speak English is the most important skill to be mastered in the primary school. The need for being able to speak English becomes even more important when he grows older.
5. He needs English for his work, for further study and for general success in life.
6. Good teachers have a profound influence on the taught and are, in a large measure responsible for the keenness of the pupils to learn English.
7. The school environment provided by parallel and dual medium schools is of value in stimulating interest in English.
8. Verbs and tenses are the most difficult things both to learn and teach.
9. Many young teachers are not competent to teach English. There appears to be need for revising the methods of training them.
10. The drills used in teaching are usually composed by non-native speakers of English.
    Spelling lists are subjectively constructed.

11. Principals and staffs feel that they would like help, at refresher courses, in the teaching of oral and written composition, the teaching of tense, spelling and pronunciation.
12. The available teaching materials exhibit certain deficiencies.
13. There are clearly discernable influences at work throughout the student's school career, in so far as his attitude to learning English is concerned. These may be used to confirm certain earlier findings.

The second part of this paper, which will be delivered at the Conference will deal with the syllabus, in relation to this material and suggestions as to how apparent weaknesses might be remedied.

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